

# PORTRAITS OF CATHOLICS WITH WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONNECTIONS: THE FAMOUS, THE FORGOTTEN, AND THE UNKNOWN

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*Faith, having no geography, knows no boundaries.*

Western Pennsylvania has played an outsized role in producing and influencing Catholics who went on to achieve national and even international recognition. Many of these were natives of this area, while others came to this area and spent time here, even if briefly, before moving on elsewhere. For that latter group, Pittsburgh was a gateway to the vast west of North America. The confluence of rivers and the positioning of mountains made it so. Native and sojourner alike would rise to prominence in a variety of fields. The Catholic faith as received during their formative years in Western Pennsylvania or as enhanced by their interaction with Western Pennsylvania Catholics left a lasting imprint on them. This article presents but a few of the stories of such individuals who are representative of the larger numbers of Catholics with ties to Western Pennsylvania who have contributed to society and the Church. A few are known internationally, some have been forgotten with the passage of time, and others are unknown to the general public.

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## Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. (1909-1992)

Patrick Joseph Peyton was a native of County Mayo, Ireland. Poverty necessitated the migration of his older siblings to the United States. Patrick joined them in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1928. Considering a vocation as a priest, the immigrant youth became the sexton (janitor) at the cathedral in Scranton. Father Patrick Dolan of the Congregation of the Holy Cross from the University of Notre Dame visited the cathedral, seeking to recruit seminarians, and met Patrick and his older brother Thomas. Both young men responded to the priest's invitation to enter the seminary at Notre Dame in 1932.

While in the seminary, Patrick was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis in 1938. His sister Nellie travelled from Scranton to the ill seminarian, reminding him of the family's history of prayers to the Blessed Mother. The seminarian's mother wrote from Ireland that she would gladly give up her life if her prayers were answered that he would recover to become a priest. Patrick was so gravely ill that surgeons cut away ribs to remove pus from his lungs. His mother died in 1939, but Patrick continued to pray for a cure for himself. He lived, pledging the rest of his life to the restoration of family prayer. Doctors subsequently noted the "miraculous" disappearance of the tuberculosis. Patrick was certain that his return to health was intended for a purpose.

In 1941, Patrick was ordained to the priesthood. Father Peyton was keenly aware of the Catholic custom of families saying the rosary together in the evening before retiring to sleep. The modern lifestyle saw this practice go by the wayside. The distressed priest vowed to change this prayerless pattern. He would therefore emphasize the importance of families praying the Family Rosary, just as the United States entered World War II.

Father Peyton visited Pittsburgh during wartime, where he stayed with Father Edward J. Moriarty (1881-1961), the Irish-born pastor of Saint Agnes Church in the Oakland neighborhood. The Pittsburgh priest's advice was pivotal in transforming Father Peyton's efforts into a national crusade that would employ use of the media to spread the message of the rosary. Impressed with Peyton's campaign to bring back family prayer, Moriarty urged the young priest to "Try to get on the radio. Here [using only the pulpit] you reach a few hundred. On the air you will reach millions."<sup>1</sup> Moriarty-



Father Peyton and Loretta Young (1940s)

Source: W. Mass, Catholic Voices



Father Peyton and Bing Crosby (1940s)

Source: Family Rosary

ty spoke from experience, as he had successfully encouraged his assistant pastor, Father Charles Owen Rice, to do just that in labor rights efforts for the working poor.

Following Moriarty's counsel, Peyton then contacted actor/singer Bing Crosby, who promised that he would enlist other prominent Catholics, including Hollywood stars. The result was the airing from New York City of the radio program "Family Theater" on May 13, 1945, with Bing Crosby along with the parents and sister of the five Sullivan brothers (who had perished when their ship sunk during the war) reciting the rosary. The program garnered the largest audience of any program in the Mutual Broadcasting System up to that date.

On the success of that single radio show, Peyton headed to Hollywood to try to establish an ongoing program series. The Family Theater Productions became a reality in 1947 and the star-studded series of inspirational radio dramas ran for 22 years. Hollywood legends Loretta Young, Joseph Cotton, Jimmy Stewart, Danny Thomas, Lucille Ball, Gregory Peck, Charles Boyer, Irene Dunne, Pat O'Brien, Dennis Day, Barry Fitzgerald, and others participated. An orchestra accompanied the actors. The program debuted locally in Pittsburgh on Mutual-KQV radio station on February 12, 1947.

Father Peyton moved quickly to utilize film, outdoor advertising, and television. His ministry produced more than 600 radio and television programs, and 10,000 broadcasts. He conducted Rosary Rallies that were attended by millions. His message was simple and direct: "The rosary is the offensive weapon that will destroy Communism – the great evil that seeks to destroy the faith."<sup>2</sup> Peyton popularized the worldwide slogans "The family that prays together stays together" and "A world at prayer is a world at peace." He quickly became known as "The Rosary Priest."

Peyton was a large and impressive man, with a thick brogue, musical voice, and sparkling eyes. He was famed for his luncheon speeches at which, after giving a few introductory words, he requested that everyone kneel to say the rosary. Waiters stared in disbelief as the high and mighty knelt in prayer.

He paid no attention to controversial accusations that his crusades in Latin America were a front for American intelligence in the 1950s and 1960s, given that for a time the CIA assisted in determining locations and provided some funding. In 1992, Peyton died at age 83 and was buried in his order's cemetery at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup>

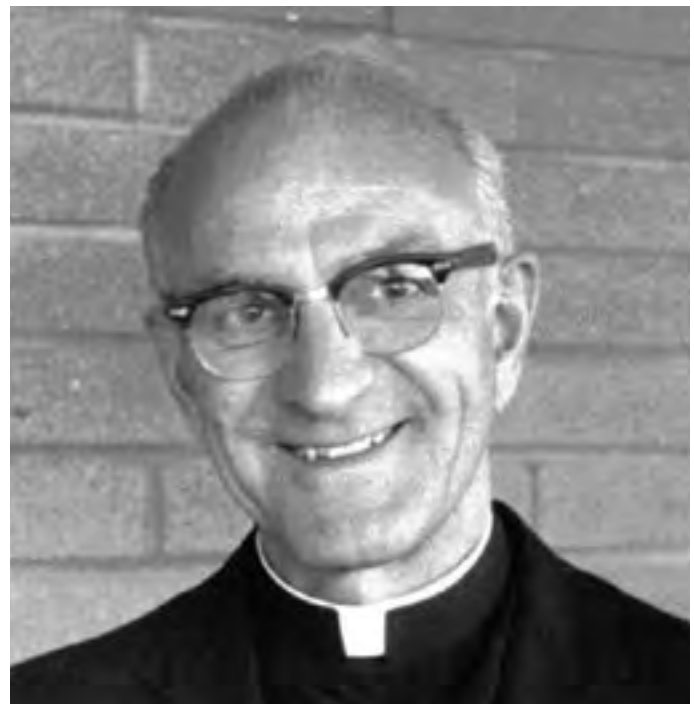
Father Peyton's work continues through his original ministries: Family Rosary, Family Theater, Family Rosary International, and Father Patrick Peyton Family Institute. Sean Patrick Cardinal O'Malley of Boston, who has his own ties to Pittsburgh, opened the cause of sainthood of Father Peyton on June 1, 2001. The priest was titled "Servant of God." The 1,300-page *positio* that studied Peyton's life and ministry for heroic virtue and sanctity of life (holiness) was sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2015 and theologians approved his cause on June 1, 2017.

Pope Francis named the famed Rosary Priest as "Venerable" on December 18, 2017. Two possible medical miracles connected to Father Peyton's intercession are under review as his cause moves toward beatification.

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### **Monsignor David E. Rosage (1913-2009)**

David E. Rosage was born in Johnstown, Cambria County, Pennsylvania and attended Immaculate Conception School and Johnstown Catholic High School. Like a number of German-descent young men, he opted to study for the priesthood at the Pontifical Seminary Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio. He was ordained for the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, on May 30, 1943 by Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, who was serving as Apostolic Delegate to the United States. Father Rosage celebrated his First Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Johnstown.



**Monsignor David E. Rosage**

Source: *The Tribune Democrat*

Assigned to parish work for his first three years, Rosage was then named diocesan Youth Director in 1946, a position he would hold until 1956, at which time he became the founding pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Spokane. In 1957, Bishop Bernard Topel of Spokane gave Rosage the task to "set up a retreat apostolate, find a piece of property, build a retreat house and pay for it."<sup>4</sup> Father Rosage did just that and Immaculate Heart Retreat Center was born. That necessitated the young priest's attendance at nightly presentations/fund raisers for five years to raise the necessary funds. Father Rosage served as director of the retreat house for 32 years, from 1957 to 1989.

Rosage was a prolific writer, for which he received national attention. He authored more than 40 books on spirituality, beginning



**Hail! The Altar Boy**

Source: Amazon.com

with *Letters to an Altar Boy* in 1953. This was quickly followed by *Hail! The Altar Boy* in 1954.<sup>5</sup> These two works became standard for altar boys in Catholic elementary schools and were highly effective in promoting awareness of a vocation to the priesthood. Both were written in an easy flowing style, intelligible to even very young boys. The works offered inspiration and high motivation for living up to the ideals that a Mass server was committed to follow. While extremely practical books, they touched on every aspect of the

altar boy's spiritual life. Father Thomas O'Donnell, director of the Knights of the Altar, described the books as:

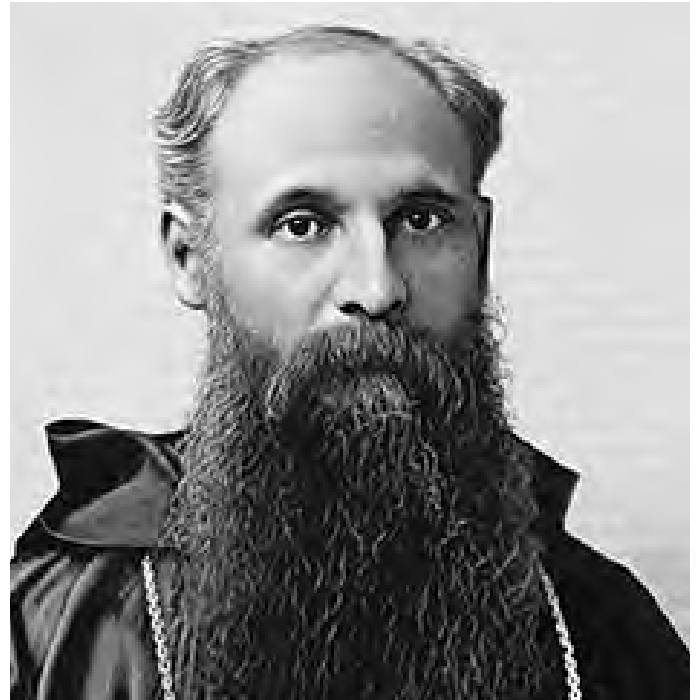
book[s] of letters for all Jimmys, Johns, Bills, Toms, and the entire host of altar boys, who from the smallest one up are the most important people in their parishes. They are God's Minutemen. Any lad who reads this book is bound to be better and to have a better understanding of the great privilege that is his.<sup>6</sup>

Rosage was a regular columnist for the diocesan *Inland Register* and created a constant flow of pamphlets, magazine articles, and other publications. By 1980, he had sold over three million copies of his books worldwide, with the proceeds going to support the retreat center's ministry, which serves the states of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. He was considered by some to be the most published priest-writer in the western United States.

In May 1967, Pope Paul VI named Rosage a domestic prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. He retired from active ministry in 1989 at age 76, and moved to Rockwood Lane Retirement Center where he continued to say Mass daily and provide spiritual direction to large numbers of Catholics in the ensuing years. In December 2008, he moved to Colonial Court where he remained until his death less than a year later on November 14, 2009 at age 96. Recognizing his unique service, the Diocese of Spokane celebrated Monsignor Rosage's funeral Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes. Burial followed at Queen of Peace Cemetery located on the grounds of Immaculate Heart Retreat Center.

Although Monsignor Rosage served in one of the least populated rural dioceses in the United States (Spokane had a Catholic population of approximately 40,000 representing only 10% of the total population), his impact on young Catholic boys, his promotion of the priestly vocation through his publications, and his outreach to Catholics seeking spiritual direction affected millions throughout the United States. The entrance of many future baby boomers into seminaries and ultimately priesthood can be attributed, at least in part, to the work of this native of Western Pennsylvania.

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**Abbot-Bishop Leo M. Haid**

Source: *Biographical History of North Carolina* (1906)

#### **Abbot-Bishop Leo Haid, O.S.B. (1849-1924)**

Michael Hite was born on July 15, 1849 near Latrobe in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, just six years after establishment of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The son of German immigrants, his last name came to be rendered "Haid" as part of the family's cultural adjustment to the New World. Young Michael was baptized at the nearby Saint Vincent Abbey – an institution that would play a central role in his life. He entered the monastery scholasticate at age 12 and made his first vows as a Benedictine monk in 1869, receiving the name "Leo" after Pope St. Leo the Great. Pittsburgh Bishop Michael Domenec ordained Haid a priest on December 21, 1872. Initially, he became a teacher at Saint Vincent and his students included John Francis Regis Canevin, a future bishop of Pittsburgh.

In 1876, Abbot (later Archabbot) Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B. (1809-1887), decided to accept a donation of 506 acres of farmland in Gaston County, North Carolina, as the site for a new Benedictine monastery and college. The donation from Catholic missionary Father Jeremiah O'Connell of the Caldwell farm bore a striking resemblance to Wimmer's acceptance in 1846 of the 300 acres of land known as Sportsman's Hall in Westmoreland County that became the site of Saint Vincent Archabbey. Wimmer was successful in obtaining Roman approval to elevate the foundation to an independent Benedictine abbey. In 1885, the 34-year-old Leo Haid was elected first abbot of Mary Help of Christians Abbey (Maryhelp), located in the rural town of Garibaldi in the most Protestant state in the Union – North Carolina.

The town's name was changed to Belmont reportedly at the insistence of Haid, who drew upon the scenic view of a nearby mountain – Belmont meaning "beautiful mountain." One story



attributes the change to Pope Leo XIII's reluctance to bless an abbey in a place that bore the name of the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi; in fact, the town had been named for an earlier stationmaster, John Garibaldi. The state legislature subsequently incorporated the town under the name Belmont.

Haid opened St. Mary's College in 1886. The abbey's success gained the ire of the North Carolina Presbyterian Convention that "passed many violent resolutions to oust the 'Romish encroachment and usurpation' of territory, hitherto wholly and exclusively Protestant."<sup>7</sup> Despite the declamations and harangues of such preachers, the monks continued to pray and work. One year later, Haid was named Vicar Apostolic of North Carolina. He was ordained bishop by James Cardinal Gibbons on July 1, 1888, thus becoming the first American abbot-bishop.

The great Gothic abbey church, built of brick and granite, was completed in 1894 under the direction of Haid. The stained glass windows from the World's Fair of 1893 were installed in the church. Mother Katharine Drexel was a major financial contributor to the building's completion. She was to play a large role in the expansion of the Benedictines in the South and in the development of a vast architectural expansion of Catholic churches, schools, and institutions designed by a Belmont monk, Father Michael McInerney, whose story is told separately below.

In 1913, St. Mary's College in Belmont changed its name to Belmont Abbey College. In 1967, it received national attention with conferral of an honorary degree upon Protestant evangelist Billy Graham. This was a bold ecumenical gesture for that time. The school became coeducational in 1972.

At the request of Haid, the Sisters of Mercy opened Sacred Heart College for women in Belmont in 1892. Accredited as a junior college in 1935, it became a four-year institution in 1966. In 1987, the college for women merged with Belmont Abbey College. Sacred Heart College's former library later became the archival repository for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. The Sisters of Mercy, including the original American foundation in Pittsburgh, opened



**Tombstone of  
Abbot-Bishop Haid in  
Belmont Abbey Cemetery**

Source: Find A Grave

the Mercy Heritage Center in 2011 – a national archives at Belmont that now holds the records collections of all the formerly independent Mercy motherhouses.<sup>8</sup>

Haid opened Benedictine foundations in Virginia, Georgia, and Florida. In June 1910, Pope Saint Pius X erected Belmont Abbey into a territorial abbey and appointed Haid as *abbot nullius* – an abbot who is exempt from diocesan control and under direct papal jurisdiction, and who exercises the authority of an ordinary

(bishop of a diocese) within the district in which his abbey is situated – with canonical jurisdiction over eight counties in North Carolina. In 1890, Haid was elected president of the Cassinese Congregation (an international union of Benedictine houses within the Benedictine Confederation), which office he held for two terms. He died at Belmont Abbey on July 24, 1924, at age 75 and was buried in the abbey cemetery.

Haid's career was one of astounding successes. He was the father of five monasteries, each with its own college or school. He ruled the Catholic Church in North Carolina for three and a half decades preceding establishment of that state's first diocese, Raleigh, in 1924. The Holy See repeatedly honored him: abbot, bishop, vicar apostolic, Roman Count, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, and America's only abbot-ordinary. By the time of his death he was dean of both the American abbots and the American Catholic hierarchy. While he was a Benedictine monk and abbot vowed to stability and observance of the monastic cloister, he was obliged to live as an active bishop in the domestic missions of the Church.



**Maryhelp Abbey and Belmont Abbey College**

Source: Belmont Abbey College

He ruled as an *abbas*, a “father,” preferring the authority of abbatial paternity over the power of episcopal jurisdiction. This was to have a profound and lasting impact in a very Protestant domain.

In 1960, the *nullius* “diocese” was reduced to the 500 acres of the monastery grounds, thus becoming the smallest “diocese” in the world. In 1975, Belmont Abbey lost its territorial status and cathedral rank to the newly created Diocese of Charlotte. However, in 1998, Pope John Paul II named the abbey church a minor basilica in recognition of its historic and architectural significance. The National Register of Historic Places includes the Belmont Abbey Historic District that encompasses the separately listed abbey-cathedral, several college structures, sites and even the famed statue of Saint Benedict. Many of these evidence the “Benedictine style” popularized by a monk-architect from Maryhelp Abbey, whose story next appears.

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**Father Michael McInerney, O.S.B. (1877-1963)**

Joseph Vincent McInerney was born on March 18, 1877 in Lock Haven, Clinton County, Pennsylvania, in what is now part of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. His parents were Irish immigrants. The father was a stone cutter-contractor. The family soon moved to McKeesport. There, Joseph attended Saint Peter School, where he was taught by the Sisters of Mercy. As a youth, Joseph assisted his father in various construction projects and quickly developed a fascination with buildings. By his high school years, his family had moved to Pittsburgh, where he attended the Holy Ghost Fathers’ Prep School. During high school, Joseph was accepted as an apprentice by W. A. Thomas, former professor of architecture at King’s College in London. Thomas supervised the boy for the next eight years, finally naming him a junior partner (1898-1900). The youth continued his education, taking two years of classes at the College of the Holy Ghost (today, Duquesne University).

Seeking to broaden his education and experience, McInerney resigned his position with Thomas and moved to Belmont, North Carolina in February 1900, where he enrolled in the Classical Studies program at the Benedictine-operated St. Mary’s College. Older than his colleagues, he quickly emerged as a leader. He completed his studies in 1902, obtaining a bachelor’s degree. The monks had already discovered that he understood architecture, so they soon engaged him in their ongoing development of buildings at the Benedictine abbey and college. Interaction with the monks stimulated the youth’s interest in a religious vocation and on August 20, 1902, Joseph McInerney entered the Benedictine order as a novice, taking the name “Michael.” He was professed a year later, and ordained a Benedictine priest in 1907.

Mary Help of Christians Abbey in Belmont was headed by Abbot Leo Haid who was, like McInerney, a native of Western Pennsylvania. Haid had a vision for developing the abbey. The importance of McInerney to achievement of Haid’s vision cannot be over-emphasized. Their dual role is considered to be without parallel in Benedictine history.<sup>9</sup> The two became a creative force unto themselves. A destructive “Great Fire” at St. Mary’s College in May



**Father Michael McInerney, O.S.B.**

Source: Find A Grave

1900 opened the way for a complete transformation of the abbey and college campus. A plan was quickly devised and construction began thereafter. The abbot and McInerney’s joint work replaced, restored and enlarged buildings, leading to an immediate enrollment increase that assured the future of the college.

Haid also had a vision for the development of Catholicism in North Carolina, spurred by his episcopal responsibilities. McInerney was to facilitate that within the Tarheel State through his design of Catholic churches, schools, convents, hospitals, and other institutions. When Abbot Haid died in 1924, the monk-architect designed a marble and granite tomb, inscribed with the abbot’s history and the three coats-of-arms the latter had used. The insignia of the abbot-bishop’s office, in relief, appeared on the body of the monument, crossed over the vault. McInerney’s design appropriately showed two croziers at odds. A less well-known McInerney work at the abbey was a splendid brick barn that replaced one destroyed by a tornado, where the cows could walk through pseudo-gothic arches.

During the construction of the Belmont Abbey basilica, Haid secured the financial support of Mother Katharine Drexel, whose evangelization of Native Americans and African Americans was evidenced in her nation-wide building campaign financed by her enormous family wealth.<sup>10</sup> McInerney would serve as the architect for hundreds of the future saint’s projects.

Less than a month after Abbot Haid’s death in 1924, the monks convoked a Chapter at Belmont to elect an *abbot nullius*, who would be nominated vicar apostolic in accordance with the provisions of the *Bulla Erectionis* of 1910. Five nominees quickly emerged – including Michael McInerney. At age forty-seven, he



had shown talent for practical administrative duties, but had never held an executive position at the abbey or school, nor engaged in pastoral duties. He was considered a man of solid monastic values and observance. As the monks scrutinized the candidates,

McInerney was the candidate who represented the best chance for maintaining some of the prestige that the monastery had enjoyed under Haid. Father Michael's talents, his possession of a reputation that was already national in scope, the distinction of his work, all endorsed his abbatial potential. And ... Father Michael was held in particularly "high esteem" in the monastery at this time. McInerney also had the advantage of representing a reasonable compromise between the demands of the cloister and those of the apostolate.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth ballot saw another monk edge out McInerney as abbot-elect of Mary Help of Christians Abbey, *abbot nullius*, and nominee for the throne of the Vicariate Apostolic of North Carolina. Thereafter, the priest devoted himself entirely to architectural work, often at a distance from the abbey. Yet his ties to the monastery were strong. The priest earned architectural fees that kept Maryhelp Abbey and its college solvent during the Great Depression. He also designed chalices, sanctuary lamps, candelabra, church furnishings, and even grave markers.

The priest focused his art almost exclusively on Catholic projects. His designs were primarily institutional, totaling more than 500 buildings: over 200 churches, 78 schools and orphanages, 27 hospitals, 18 monasteries and convents, and 10 gymnasiums. Benedictine influence was reflected in his use of natural and native materials, austerity of interiors, the use of simple lines, and a disinclination to use of ornamentation and embellishment. He customarily signed his buildings with a long-stemmed cross, sometimes in bold relief and at other times subtly inscribed in the brickwork.

Father McInerney's work is easily divided into three phases:

- *Phase I* (1900-1930): In his early work, McInerney developed a variation on the German Gothic Revival that acquired the popular designation "American Benedictine" from its frequent use by monasteries. This style's principal statement presented imposing beauty and simplicity through the use of a box shape distinguished by the roof projection, texturing of brickwork, and the shapes and sizes of windows.

This approach was a reflection of the poverty of the Catholic Church in the South that forced McInerney to produce small chapels. As the Sisters of Mercy expanded their hospital network, he designed their hospitals and related facilities. By the 1920s he had a national clientele and most of his larger projects were outside of North Carolina. Notices of his designs appeared with those of other architects in the *Manufacturers' Record*, where he was typically identified as "Father Michael of Belmont Abbey."



**St. Michael Church, Wheeling WV**

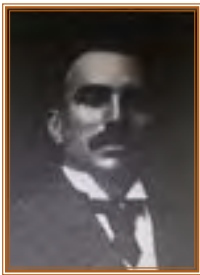
Source: St. Michael Church

- *Phase II* (1930-1945): In the middle period of his architectural career, McInerney shifted his principal medium from brick to stone, from Gothic Revival to a striking conception of Romanesque arches imposed on classic facades. This coincided with the demand for the monk to design the more monumental buildings in the Catholic Northeast. The interiors were rendered with exposed beams that towered above naves and sanctuaries. This was the most prolific and artistically fruitful period of his career.
- *Phase III* (1945-1963): McInerney's final period saw a reversal – economized exterior lines, flat roofs, squared towers, and emphasis on the box form. Yet he remained devoted to the Gothic aspirations of his youth. St. Michael Church (1952), in nearby Wheeling, West Virginia, is considered to be the most exquisite design of his last years. Here, he created a striking unornamented interior whose art and expression proceed entirely from the church's structural design, not from its decoration. His work at the Wheeling church was accompanied by several design projects at the Jesuits' newly established Wheeling College and at Wheeling Hospital.

The monk published many articles on church architecture, hospital architecture, stained glass, and related topics. He served on the faculty of Belmont Abbey College beginning in 1903, and taught at St. Louis University in Missouri during the summers. The American Institute of Architects and the Stained Glass Association of America honored him.

Mother Katharine Drexel, who emerged as McInerney's stalwart supporter after Haid's death in 1924, died in 1955. Father Michael survived until 1963. In his final years, Saint Vincent College in Latrobe awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his artistic contributions to the Benedictine order through a career of more than half a century.

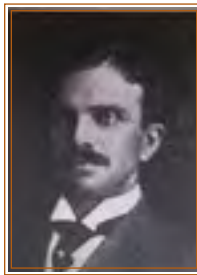
Michael McInerney, O.S.B., died in Mercy Hospital (which he had designed) in Charlotte, North Carolina on March 3, 1963, just two weeks short of his 86th birthday. He is buried in Belmont Abbey Cemetery.<sup>12</sup>



**Michael Beezer**  
Source: *Union Bulletin*

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**Louis Beezer (1869-1929), Michael J. Beezer (1869-1933)**

American history has witnessed some father and son architect-duos and there have been occasional instances of brothers who became architects. But twin brothers who became architects



**Louis Beezer**  
Source: *Union Bulletin*

are indeed a rarity. Western Pennsylvania can lay claim to one such twin-brother architectural pair – the Beezer brothers, Louis and Michael. The two were born on July 6, 1869 in Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania (now part of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown) to immigrant German parents. Their lives were intertwined thereafter.

Early work with a construction business introduced Louis to architecture. He advanced to become a building foreman in Altoona by age 21. Louis departed for Pittsburgh where he studied architecture; he returned to Altoona where he began his practice and was joined by his brother Michael there. In 1892 the two began their three-decades-long partnership.

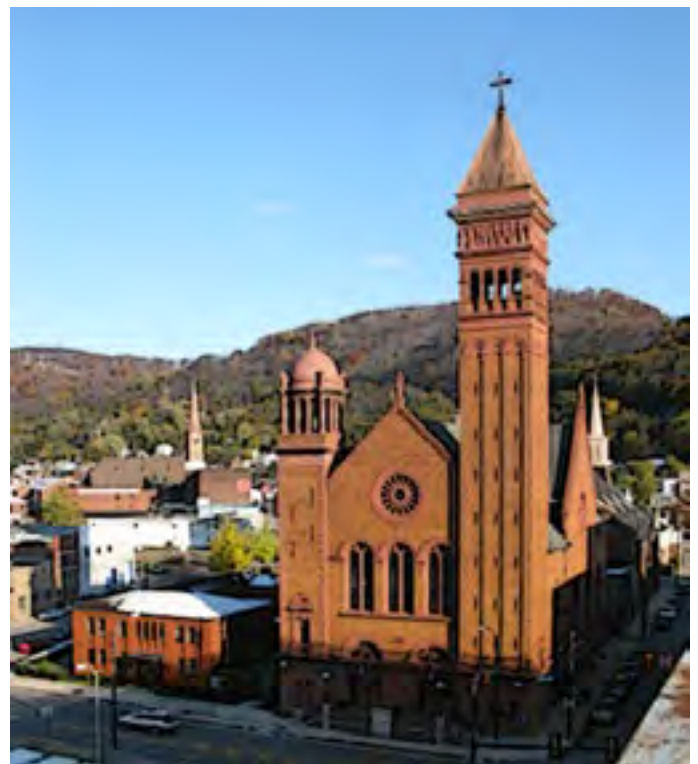
The first mention of the firm in *The Pittsburgh Catholic* was an article noting completion of the new rectory for Sacred Heart Parish in Altoona, described as having “pleasing architectural outlines.”<sup>13</sup> A far greater accomplishment was the brothers’ design of Saint John Gualbert Church in Johnstown. The church was dedicated in 1896 as a permanent replacement for the parish church destroyed in the great Johnstown Flood of 1889. The church was described thusly:

The new church was planned and built by Beezer Brothers, talented Catholic young men ... and is Renaissance in style of architecture. It is the first church to adopt the modern steel construction. A fine campanile stands on one corner of the front, the inspiration coming to the architects from the campanile recently destroyed in Venice. The logia is very ornamental, having over it on the four sides an angels’ frieze in half relief. On the other corner is the bell tower, surmounted by Diogenes’ lamp. The four lions on each of the corners, and the graceful Corinthian pillars supporting the circular roof, are beautiful. Vitrified brick, iron-spotted, and terra cotta are used to great advantage in the construction of the building. The whole exterior of the building is impressive in its grace and majesty, but the beauty of the queen’s daughter is within. There are no applied ornaments. Anything added would crowd, and anything left out would mar the harmony. Plaster of Paris stucco work is used in an artistic manner. The church was recently frescoed and done by a talented artist. Cream and a wealth of gold, with delicate tints of color bring out the beauty of the plaster work. The windows are works of art. The altars and the stations of the cross are in keeping with

the building. The building is lighted with a profusion of electric bulbs, most arranged that the light falls softly while showing the great beauty of the interior.<sup>14</sup>

While in Altoona, the brothers designed a 20-room Tudor Revival house, “Elmhurst,” set on 130 acres near Loretto for William Thaw, Sr., heir to a multi-million-dollar railroad and mine fortune. This summer residence cost an astronomical \$150,000 (equivalent to \$4 million in 2018).<sup>15</sup> Shortly thereafter, Harry K. Thaw (1871-1947), son of the railroad tycoon, gained international notoriety for his 1906 murder of architect Stanford White at Madison Square Garden in New York City over the affections of Thaw’s wife, Florence Evelyn Nesbit.

The twins moved to Pittsburgh, the center of commerce and industry in Western Pennsylvania, in 1900. During their seven years in the Steel City, the brothers designed a number of Pittsburgh churches and houses including Saint Augustine (German) Church and Saint John the Baptist Church, both in Lawrenceville. The young designer John Theodore Comès worked in this firm, and the two churches are typically attributed to his skill and art.<sup>16</sup> Saints Peter and Paul Church in Beaver Falls followed. Yet, the brothers did not forget their roots as an article in the 1902 issue of the *Catholic* noted:



**St. John Gualbert Church  
(now co-cathedral), Johnstown PA**

Source: St. John Gualbert Cathedral Parish

BELLEFONTE. Messrs. Michael J. and Louis Beezer, the well-known Pittsburgh architects, have presented St. John’s

Church of which Rev. P. McArdle is pastor, with a new pipe organ to cost not less than \$1,500. The Beezer brothers are natives of Bellefonte, where their parents still live. In a recent letter to the rector, offering the gift, they say it is offered for the love of God and the advantage of the congregation. The work of erecting the organ will begin in the near future.<sup>17</sup>

After seven years in Pittsburgh, the twins decided to move to the burgeoning West Coast, settling in Seattle. The brothers' Catholic connections assured them of business in this growing Catholic city and their sound management practices secured their financial success. They retained direct control of daily on-site work rather than subcontracting that work to third parties. Reflecting the times, the Beezer Brothers acted as architects, construction managers, and construction supervisors over a far-flung area stretching as far north as Alaska and as far south as Los Angeles.

Their arrival in Seattle in mid-1907 witnessed their first significant project on the West Coast – designing the Colman Dock as the city's new steamship terminal. Homes for the *nouveau riche*, commercial buildings, and apartment buildings quickly followed. But the Beezer Brothers established their professional reputation through projects that met the needs of the newly established diocese in Seattle (1903).<sup>18</sup> The massive English Gothic Revival Church of the Blessed Sacrament (1909-1925) and Immaculate Conception School were the first projects in 1909; the Cathedral School followed in 1911. The firm's work for the diocese was accompanied by projects for religious orders, such as the Dominicans and the Jesuits, with the latter including the preliminary work on the relocation of Seattle College (now Seattle University).

They also undertook construction supervision of Saint Mary Hospital in Walla Walla, Washington, in 1909, designed by another architect. That success launched their hospital design work, principally for the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace in the states of Washington, Montana, and Idaho. After World War I, Beezer Brothers increasingly worked outside Seattle. While commercial structures such as banks were a steady source of work, and the brothers even designed Herzl Congregation Synagogue in Seattle, their architectural expertise was truly demonstrated in their Catholic projects. Beezer Brothers' commercial and ecclesiastical work throughout the West Coast provided structures that were metropolitan in character that commanded popular appreciation in smaller communities.

A commission for Saint Dominic Church (1923-1929) in San Francisco separated the twins for the first time in three decades, with Louis opening a branch practice in San Francisco in 1923. Archbishop Hanna of San Francisco called this French Gothic Revival structure "the most beautiful Catholic church in Western America."<sup>19</sup> Catholic connections between San Francisco and Los Angeles led to Louis's design (along with prominent California architect Thomas Franklin Power) of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament (1925-1928) in Hollywood, which was reportedly the second largest church on the West Coast at the time of its opening and came to be known as the "Church of the Stars."<sup>20</sup> Louis

Beezer died in San Francisco on January 2, 1929.

Louis's years in San Francisco robbed his brother Michael, still in Seattle, of the brotherly interaction that produced commissions and new architectural designs. The Seattle office clearly suffered, went into eclipse, and no significant projects emerged from that office before Michael retired in 1932 at the depths of the Depression. Michael died of a heart attack on September 15, 1933, four and a half years after his twin brother.

The Beezer brothers were devout Catholics and their religious beliefs, coupled with a strong work ethic, helped shape the physical identity of Seattle and local Catholic communities throughout the West Coast.<sup>21</sup>

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**Father George Deshon, C.S.P. (later in life)**

Source: Paulist Archives

## Father George Deshon, C.S.P. (1823-1903)

George Deshon was born in 1823 in New London, Connecticut of old Huguenot (French Protestant) stock. He was brave and daring and loved to read tales of the conquerors of the olden times; members of his family had served in the American military dating back to the Revolutionary War. At the age of 16, he secured a nomination to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was admitted on July 1, 1839. His roommate, classmate, and friend was Ulysses S. Grant. Deshon graduated second in his class of 39 cadets in 1843.<sup>22</sup> He was promoted to Second Lieutenant and assigned as a topographical engineer. He was then assigned to the Ordnance Department. Recognized for his intelligence, Deshon was named an assistant professor at West Point and then again assigned to ordnance duties. He returned to West Point as Principal Assistant Professor of Geography, History and Ethics from



1846 to 1849. It was during this time that the young officer began to examine the history of Christianity and the divisions that had occurred among Christians.

Deshon was then assigned as an Assistant Ordnance Officer to the arsenal in Washington, D.C. (1850-1851) and subsequently to the Allegheny Arsenal in Lawrenceville<sup>23</sup> in 1851; promotion to First Lieutenant occurred the same year. Deshon, however, made a dramatic change in his career track by resigning his army commission on October 31, 1851 and applying to join the Redemptorists (officially, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer). Deshon the seeker and thinker was also a man of conviction; having found the truth in the Catholic Church, he gave his life to it. His desire now was to proclaim the truth so that other Americans could find themselves as Catholics. Once a soldier, always a soldier – but he would now serve in an army with a different purpose.

The Redemptorists had been established in 1749 by Saint Alphonsus Liguori and were devoted to missionary work. Members arrived in the United States in 1832. Seven years later, they were called to Pittsburgh to assume charge of the German-speaking population. The order soon attracted new members, including immigrants John Neumann (1811-1860) and Francis Xavier Seelos (1819-1867),<sup>24</sup> both of whom ministered in Pittsburgh at Saint Philomena Church. Seelos served in Pittsburgh during the years 1845-1854 successively as curate to Father Neumann, superior of the community, pastor, and novice master. Seelos's reputation as a spiritual director and confessor explains why Deshon's conversion to Catholicism and decision to enter the Redemptorists shortly after baptism is attributed to Seelos's influence.

Deshon was ordained a Redemptorist priest in 1855. However, in 1858, he and four other Redemptorists successfully petitioned for a dispensation from their Redemptorist vows in order to form a new religious group — the Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle, popularly known as the Paulists. Fathers Isaac Hecker, Francis Baker, Clarence Walworth, Augustine Hewitt, and George Deshon were the founders of this new society. All were American by birth and Catholic by conversion. They had concluded that missionary activity in the United States would be largely ineffective unless methods suited to the country and its culture were adopted. Lectures to directly address Protestants were deemed a necessity. The speaking campaign would be supplemented by formation of the Catholic Publication Society (today, the Paulist Press) to disseminate Catholic doctrine on a large scale to non-Catholics.

The five priests took vows in the new community on July 7, 1858.

Archbishop John Hughes of New York formed Saint Paul the Apostle Parish in Manhattan and assigned it to the Paulists. The parish extended from 52nd Street to 110th Street, and from the

Hudson River to Sixth Avenue. The Paulists established their motherhouse and church on Ninth Avenue, between 59th and 60th Streets. The church was located in the infamous “Hell’s Kitchen” neighborhood.

Father Deshon would split his time during the remaining 45 years of his life between the Paulists’ New York house and giving missions throughout the United States. He published a book entitled *Guide for Catholic Young Women* in 1868. His friendship with President Grant facilitated his mediation of a dispute between the Catholic hierarchy and the American government over Indian missions. He would later publish a volume of his sermons in 1902.<sup>25</sup> He served as the congregation’s novice master, assistant superior, and director of the community’s temporal interests, which reflected his business ability.



**St. Paul the Apostle Church, Manhattan (1960s)**

Source: Church of St. Paul the Apostle

His skill and knowledge as an Army engineer were put to the test during construction of the massive Church of Saint Paul the Apostle (1876-1885) on Columbus Avenue at the corner of West 60th Street on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Father Deshon and Jeremiah O’Rourke designed the Late Victorian Gothic Revival-style church. O’Rourke died during construction and Deshon oversaw completion of the work. Using the 13th century Cathedral of *Santa Croce* in Florence as a model, Deshon used Tarrytown grey stones salvaged from the Croton Aqueduct and other structures in Manhattan – giving it a solid fortress-like appearance.<sup>26</sup> The church was dedicated in 1885, before completion of the 114-foot towers and the interior decoration which stands in marked contrast to the somewhat plain exterior.

The church became known for its ecclesiastical art: Stanford White decorated the side chapels; John LaFarge designed the stained glass windows; August Saint-Gaudens, Frederick MacMonnies, Bertram Goodhue, and William Laurel Harris also contributed to the church’s interior. Lumen Martin Winter’s *Angel of the Resurrection*, in the northeast corner of the nave, adorns the sarcophagus of Father Isaac Hecker, the best known of the five Paulist founders. The beauty of the church reflected the Paulists’ emphasis on superb liturgy, effective preaching, and exceptional music.

Father Deshon was elected Superior General of the Paulists in 1897. He undertook to expand the order in the United States. Paulist houses were opened in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Winchester (Tennessee), and Chicago. The order grew to 300 priests and a large number of seminarians. Death came to the

last of the five founders of the Paulists on December 30, 1903 at age 80. *The New York Times* reported that 20,000 people paid their respects at Deshon's funeral and

Among the flowers in the casket were a wreath of immortelles sent by the cadets of West Point, of which Father Deshon was a graduate, and a floral column sent by the Rev. W. M. Grosvenor, rector of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, and an old friend of the dead priest.<sup>27</sup>

Father Deshon – West Point graduate, engineer, convert, priest, Redemptorist, Paulist, author, and builder – was entombed in a crypt off a chapel on the lower level under the south tower of the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle, which he had designed and built. That was his earthly monument. His spiritual monument lives on in the Paulists' evangelization by pulpit and print, radio and television, movie screen and internet – as true missionaries to North America with a ministry of Christian unity, reconciliation, and inter-religious relations.

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**Father James Reid (1793-1868)**

**Major Bernard J. Reid (1823-1904)**

**Judge Ambrose B. Reid (1857-1942)**

**Father George J. Reid (1863-1937)**

**Bernard Meredith Reid (1897-1982)**

**Alfred Damian Reid (1899-1983)**

**Alfred D. Reid, Jr. (1934-1989)**

The Reids were a prominent Catholic family in Western Pennsylvania for five generations, covering a period of almost two centuries, but have now largely been forgotten. The earliest mention of the family is Father James Reid (1793-1868), a native of County Monaghan, Ireland, who at age 24 immigrated with his parents to Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. Ordained in 1832, he served in Ohio and Maryland before returning to Pennsylvania, where he was accepted into the new Diocese of Pittsburgh by Bishop Michael O'Connor in 1846. He ministered throughout the Ohio River Valley on horse and buggy, finally becoming pastor of SS. Peter and Paul Church in Beaver, which is located at the most northern point in the course of the Ohio River. Father Reid established a number of churches in New Castle, Cannelton, New Bedford, and Sewickley.

Father Reid had several members of his extended family become well known in their professional fields. A nephew, a grandnephew, and a great-grandnephew would achieve secular fame in the field of law. Another grandnephew would achieve ecclesiastical prominence. And another great-grandnephew and a great-great-grandnephew would achieve national fame in architecture.

The priest's nephew, Bernard J. Reid (1823-1904), was born in Westmoreland County and became one of the first Catholics to become an attorney in Western Pennsylvania. His law office was located in Clarion but he also practiced in Jefferson, Forest and Venango counties in his capacity as counsel to Standard Oil Company. He enlisted in the Union Army during the American



**Judge Ambrose B. Reid**

Source: *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*

Civil War, became a captain in the famed 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, took part in General George B. McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in Virginia, and ended his military career with the title of major.<sup>28</sup> Major Bernard Reid married Letitia Farran, whose family included one of the first native-born Pittsburghers (Margaret Farran) to enter a religious order (the Sisters of Charity) and one of the first priests in the Diocese of Pittsburgh (Father John C. Farren).<sup>29</sup>

Major Reid's son, Ambrose Bernard Reid (1857-1942), was born in Clarion County in 1857, just four years after establishment of the Diocese of Erie. Ambrose attended the University of Notre Dame, then registered as a law student in his father's law offices in 1875, and was admitted to the bar in Clarion County in 1878. In 1890, Ambrose moved to Pittsburgh where he was admitted to the bar of Allegheny County and became a partner of attorney Alfred Valentine Demetrius Watterson. At this time, there were few Catholic attorneys in Pittsburgh and no Catholics held the position of judge. That changed in 1911 when Ambrose Reid became the Democratic Party's candidate for the office of judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County. The Republican Party dominated Allegheny County politics and its nomination of a candidate was tantamount to election. A week before the election in November, the Voters' League of Allegheny County published a report about the unprofessional conduct of the Republican candidate. The publicity caused a sensation and voters' sentiment turned in favor of Reid who subsequently was elected judge. He went on to be reelected twice. Judge Reid became president judge of the court in 1933 and held that position until his death on November 29, 1941.

Judge Reid not only served as a lawyer and judge, but was one of the most prominent laymen in local Catholic circles. He was one of the first instructors at the Duquesne University Law School, an organizer and board member of the Conference of Catholic Char-

ities, member of the board of directors of St. Joseph's Protectory, director and vice president of Calvary Cemetery, an incorporator of St. Mary's Cemetery, board member of St. Michael's Cemetery, member of the board of directors of the Holy Name Society, chairman of the St. Paul Cathedral church committee, member of the boards of Central Catholic High School and Duquesne University, charter member and grand knight of the Duquesne Council of the Knights of Columbus, and an organizer of the Lawyers' Retreat Movement at St. Paul Monastery. Judge Reid also served as secretary of the board of trustees of St. Michael's Seminary – the nonprofit corporation established in 1890 by Bishop Richard Phelan to own, manage and ultimately sell the property on which the first diocesan seminary was located in the Hazelwood section of Pittsburgh, and to oversee the financing of the education of diocesan seminarians. Judge Reid received honorary degrees from Duquesne University, Mount St. Mary's University, and the University of Notre Dame.<sup>30</sup>

Judge Reid's younger brother, Father George J. Reid (1863-1937), became an attorney with the family firm and then studied for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1892 in the second St. Paul Cathedral (downtown) and served in New Castle and Cresson. At the request of Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul (Minnesota), Father Reid became professor of Sacred Scripture at the archdiocesan seminary 1901-1906. Reid's health later required a milder climate and he moved to Texas where he served for 26 years as pastor in Clarksville in the Diocese of Dallas. He was a prolific historian and author, co-authoring a history of Clarion County and contributing numerous articles to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and various Catholic publications. While Father Reid died in Texas, his funeral Mass was held at St. Paul Cathedral in Pittsburgh, with burial in Calvary Cemetery.<sup>31</sup> The judge and his priest-brother also had two sisters, Sister Alphonso and Sister Mary Agnes, who had joined the Sisters of Mercy of Erie.

Judge Reid and his wife had two sons, who constituted the fourth generation of the Reid family in Western Pennsylvania: attorney Bernard Meredith Reid and architect Alfred Damian Reid.<sup>32</sup> B. Meredith Reid (1897-1982) was the judge's older son. He was educated at Georgetown University (A.B., 1921) and received his law degree at the University of Pittsburgh (LL.B., 1924). He was admitted to the bar in October 1924, and was appointed an assistant district attorney of Allegheny County in April 1925. He later resigned to become an associate of the nationally prominent Pennsylvania attorney Charles J. Margiotti (1891-1956), who served twice as Attorney General of Pennsylvania. In 1936, Reid opened his own law firm. He served in the U.S. Army during World War I. Tracking his father's prominent Catholic role, Meredith served on the board of the Conference of Catholic Charities, as a director of St. Joseph's Protectory, and a faculty member at Duquesne University School of Law.

Judge Reid's younger son, Alfred Damian Reid (1899-1983), did not follow his father into the legal profession. Alfred attended Georgetown University (A.B., 1921), followed by two years of study at the University of Pennsylvania; he then returned to Pittsburgh where he completed studies at Carnegie Institute of

Technology (B. Arch., 1924). He began the practice of architecture under famed architect Carlton Strong (1862-1931)<sup>33</sup> during two periods 1924-1926 and 1927-1931, but from 1926 to 1927 he was a partner in the short-lived architectural firm of Reid & Burke. After Strong's death in 1931, Reid launched the firm Kaiser, Neil & Reid, continuing Strong's projects. In 1953, Reid formed Alfred D. Reid Associates, and by 1964 he was joined at the firm by his son Alfred D. Reid, Jr. Alfred D. Reid was responsible for numerous Catholic churches and institutions – including completion of the famed Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside that was begun in 1924.<sup>34</sup> Other projects during the Carlton Strong phase of Reid's career included the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God in Castle Shannon, Nativity Church and School on the North Side, St. George School in Allentown, St. Paul Cathedral rectory, school and dormitory buildings at Mount Mercy College, Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church on the North Side, St. Michael Church in Braddock, and St. Basil School in Carrick. Buildings designed by Reid's successor firm included the Little Sisters of the Poor Home in Garfield, St. Joseph Hall and a classroom building at Mount Mercy College, an addition to Mercy Hospital, and St. Justin Convent in Mount Washington – to list but a few.<sup>35</sup> Fittingly, Alfred served as a trustee of Mount Mercy College. During and after World War I, he served as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army (1918-1919). Like his father and his brother, he resided on Devonshire Road in Oakland and was a member of St. Paul Cathedral Parish. All three were buried in the Reid family plot in Calvary Cemetery in Pittsburgh.

In the fifth generation, architect Alfred D. Reid, Jr. (1934-1989) founded the nonprofit Architects Workshop to advance deserving community architectural projects. He designed the new St. Lawrence O'Toole building complex in Garfield, Grace Library at Carlow College (now Carlow University), and Visitation Church in Johnstown – in addition to numerous institutions and hospitals such as Harmarville Rehabilitation Center, Magee-Womens Hospital, and Pittsburgh Association for the Blind. His unexpected death at age 54, while serving as chairman of the architectural firm of Reid & Stuhldreher, brought an end to the direct line of architects in the Reid family in Western Pennsylvania.<sup>36</sup> He was buried from Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside and, reflecting his family's original American roots, was buried in St. Vincent Cemetery in Latrobe, Westmoreland County.



**Private  
Thomas Enright**  
Source: Find A Grave

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### **Thomas Francis Enright (1887-1917)**

The year 2018 marks the centenary of the end of World War I – the conflict that began in 1914 and saw the entrance of the United States with the U.S. Congress's declaration of war against Germany on April 6, 1917. One of the first three American casualties was a Catholic Pittsburgher, Thomas Francis Enright.



Enright was born on Taylor Street, a side street off Liberty Avenue, in the Bloomfield section of the city of Pittsburgh on May 8, 1887. He was the seventh (and fourth surviving) child of Irish immigrants, John and Ellen Enright, and the first of their children to be born in the United States. While the family lived just a stone's throw from Saint Joseph (German) Church on Liberty Avenue, they and other Irish in that neighborhood belonged to the territorial Saint Mary Church on 46th Street in the adjacent Lawrenceville neighborhood. The baby was accordingly baptized at Saint Mary Church, where he would later receive his First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Thomas completed eight years of schooling at Saint Mary School, under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy.

Thomas enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1909, while Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall was under construction in the Oakland neighborhood. Private Enright saw service in the 6th Cavalry Regiment in the Philippine Islands where he earned the title Expert Cavalryman while fighting the secessionist Moros (Muslims) during the Philippine Insurrection. By 1914, he was serving at Vera Cruz in Mexico with the 16th Infantry Regiment. Here, while aboard ship in Vera Cruz harbor, his former classmate from St. Mary School, U.S. Marine Francis DeLowery, was shot from the mast of the USS *New Hampshire*.<sup>37</sup> In 1916, Enright was again in Mexico serving under General John J. Pershing during the American "Punitive Expedition" to capture the bandit Pancho Villa. Shortly thereafter, having completed two enlistments, Enright left the service and returned to Pittsburgh. His stay in the Steel City would, however, be brief.

Enright re-enlisted in the U.S. Army and rejoined his old outfit, the 16th Infantry Regiment at Fort Bliss, Texas. Following the American declaration of war in 1917, the 2,600-strong 16th Infantry headed by rail to Hoboken, New Jersey, for embarkation. His regiment left the United States as part of the very first American troop convey to Europe. The Atlantic Ocean crossing took two weeks. On June 26, Enright disembarked at St. Nazaire, France, as part of the 1st Infantry Division. Their chief of operations was George C. Marshall of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, who would achieve immortality in World War II.

Four months later, Enright's Company F was moved up to the trenches at Bathlemont, in the Toul sector in the Lorraine region in northeastern France, to relieve the French forces. A French deserter promptly informed the Germans of the Americans' presence. A little after 3 A.M. on the morning of November 3, 1917, the Imperial German Army launched a nearly hour-long "box assault" which was an artillery assault to the left, right, and rear of Company F's position, cutting them off from reinforcements and retreat. Across a frozen no man's land, 200 seasoned German shock troops advanced. Eleven men of Company F were taken prisoner. Five were left wounded. And three were killed.

Privates Enright and Merle D. Hay (of Glidden, Iowa), along with Corporal James Bethel Gresham (of Evansville, Indiana), became the first three casualties of the American Expeditionary Force. Hay was shot, stabbed, and stomped to death. Gresham was shot

between the eyes. A few yards away lay Enright face down, his head nearly severed from his body by a trench knife – a 20th century weapon akin to that used over the centuries. Scattered about the trench were some German helmets and rifles.

Two days later, the three soldiers were buried with French and American military honors near the battlefield where they had died. An inscription marked their graves: "Here lie the first soldiers of the illustrious Republic of the United States who fell on French soil for justice and liberty."<sup>38</sup> *The Pittsburgh Press* quoted the eulogy given by the French general who commanded the division of which the American detachment had formed a part:

Private Enright ... in the name of France I bid you farewell. Of your own free will you left your happy, prosperous country and took your place by our side.

You fell facing the foe, in hard, in desperate hand-to-hand fight.

All honor to them. Their families should be proud to learn of their deaths.

We of France ask that the mortal remains of these young men be left with us forever.

We will inscribe on their tombs: "Here lie the first United States soldiers to fall on French soil for liberty and justice.

Passersby will uncover their heads to their graves; men of heart visiting the battlefield will go out of their way to bring their tribute of respect and gratitude.

Private Enright ... in the name of France, I thank you. May God receive your soul. Farewell!<sup>39</sup>

On November 26, 1917, the French Croix de Guerre (War Cross) was posthumously conferred on Private Enright by the French general commanding the sector in which Enright had been stationed at the time of the German raid.<sup>40</sup> A granite monument honoring the three American soldiers was later erected at the burial site.<sup>41</sup>

Word of Enright's death reached his family and the media on November 5. His sister, Mrs. Mary Irwin – who lived in the Morningside section of Pittsburgh and with whom he made his home while visiting family in the city<sup>42</sup> – received the following telegram early that morning:

Deeply regret to inform you that  
Private Thomas F. Enright,  
Company F, Sixteenth Infantry, is reported  
killed in action.  
McCain  
Adjutant General Department, U.S. Army<sup>43</sup>

The deaths were nationally publicized and hardened American resolve to fight the war. Pittsburgh newspaper headlines screamed from the front pages:

• "Huns Raid U.S. Trenches; Three of Our Boys Dead; Five Wounded, Twelve Prisoners"<sup>44</sup>

- “Local Man Slain in Battle”<sup>45</sup>
- “First Victim of Germans is Local Youth.”<sup>46</sup>

The gist of the many provocatively anti-German headlines and articles could be summed up simply in one message – “Huns Kill Local Youth.”<sup>47</sup> Additional local newspaper articles about Enright quickly followed.<sup>48</sup> The press presented the three American soldiers as if they could have been the sons of any millworker or farmer. That message resonated with the public and war bond sales spiked.

World War I ended with an armistice on November 11, 1918, exactly one year and eight days after the death of Private Enright. The Enright family, the mayor of Pittsburgh, and veterans groups called upon the War Department to return the hero’s body to Pittsburgh for burial. Nothing happened for almost four years.

Finally on July 10, 1921, on the same Hoboken Pier 4 from which Enright and his comrades had departed four years earlier, General John “Blackjack” Pershing greeted the transport ships *Wheaton* and *Somme*, which carried the bodies of Thomas Enright, James Gresham, and Merle Hay. Theirs were among more than 7,000 flag-draped coffins unloaded from the two ships. Pershing delivered an address and then laid a wreath on each of the caskets of Enright, Gresham, and Hay.<sup>49</sup> These coffins represented but a small fraction of the more than 116,000 Americans who had perished in the war in the one year following Enright’s death. Thomas Enright was the sole Catholic among the three. His reburial attracted national attention, and Catholics felt particularly patriotic.

On Wednesday, July 13, shortly before 10 A.M., the body arrived by train at Pittsburgh’s Union Station (the new name assigned in 1912 to the former Pennsylvania Station or “Penn Station” at the corner of Grant Street and Liberty Avenue), draped with the American flag and banked under a huge mass of lilies and ferns. At the family’s request, there was no formal ceremony.

The casket was transported in an undertaker’s hearse to the home of Enright’s sister, Mrs. Johanna Trunzer, in Etna, a borough north of Pittsburgh. Flags in the area were at half-staff. Neighbors filed through the house during the afternoon to pay their last respects to the fallen hero.

Early on Friday, July 15, the casket was removed to lie in state at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in the city’s Oakland section. The hall was the largest memorial in the United States dedicated solely to honoring all branches of military veterans and service members. The pallbearers were alumni of St. Mary’s School and veterans of the war. A guard of 12 former servicemen accompanied the casket.



**First Americans Killed in Battle with Germany**

Source: Iowa Historical Society

Veterans groups, working with municipal officials, military, fraternal groups, and business organizations devised a “great city-wide demonstration” with a “half-holiday” to honor the fallen war hero on the day of the funeral. The organizers called “upon all patriotic men, women and children to cease from their ordinary work to pay their tribute to a splendid fighter

who gave his life for his country.”<sup>50</sup>

On Saturday, July 16, at 10 A.M., Robert G. Woodside, national commander-in-chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, led a funeral procession up Fifth Avenue. The casket, draped with an American flag, was borne on a gun caisson drawn by four black horses, with four khaki-clad soldiers marching at their side. Eight veterans in military dress served as a guard of honor. Enright’s surviving two sisters and two brothers rode in a car following the caisson. Fifty-four posts of the American Legion and the V.F.W. were in the line of march. Veterans from the Civil War (Grand Army of the Republic), the Spanish-American War, and World War I filled the ranks of marchers. The Salvation Army Band played “Nearer My God to Thee” as the casket was carried up the front steps to Saint Paul Cathedral.

The cathedral was filled with more than 2,000 people, including the mayor of Pittsburgh, members of city council, department heads, Allegheny County commissioners, state and federal representatives. Many stood in the aisles; hundreds who attempted entry were turned aside. The cathedral’s two Boy Scouts troops acted as ushers. The cathedral church committee met the body of Private Enright at the door of the church and escorted the casket down the center aisle to a spot in front of the main altar. Newly installed Bishop Hugh C. Boyle<sup>51</sup> presided from his throne in the sanctuary. Father Charles J. Coyne – pastor of Saint Mary Church on 46th Street where Enright had been baptized – celebrated a Solemn Requiem Mass, assisted by Fathers J. Earl McManamy, William J. Munster, and William Hogan. The cathedral’s male choir sang the Mass in Latin under the direction of cathedral organist and choirmaster Joseph Otten. Bishop Boyle gave the final benediction. The choir sang the *Miserere* and the priests chanted the Prayers for the Dead.<sup>52</sup>

After the final obsequies, the funeral procession left the cathedral for Saint Mary Cemetery in Lawrenceville where Private Enright was reburied with full military honors. A special speakers’ stand had been constructed at graveside and several present there spoke, including Judge Ambrose B. Reid of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, V.F.W. Commander-in-Chief Woodside, Past V.F.W. Commander-in-Chief William E. Ralston, and Father Coyne.

Final prayers were offered. A squad of ten fired a volley over the grave. Four buglers sounded taps from different points before the casket was lowered into the grave. At the conclusion, a wreath from General Pershing that had been placed upon the casket at Hoboken was laid upon the grave. A simple tombstone marks this Pittsburgh soldier's final resting place in Section M of Saint Mary Cemetery. Private Enright is buried next to his parents.

Public recognition of Enright quickly followed. Some efforts came to fruition while others did not:<sup>53</sup>

- Pittsburgh City Council voted to rename Premo Street in Morningside, where Enright's one sister lived, in honor of the dead patriot. Some residents objected and the street today remains Premo Street.
- The Pittsburgh Commercial Club laid plans to raise funds to build a memorial to Enright with contributions of pennies based on the contributor's age – but nothing came of this plan.
- In December 1928, some eleven years after Enright's death, the Enright Theater was dedicated at 5820 Penn Avenue in the heart of East Liberty. The largest theater in the East End, it seated 3,200. A parade preceded the ceremony and the 324th Observation Squadron flew their PT Army planes low dropping wreaths upon the theater's roof. The ceremony left an impression on attendees due to the fact that an honorific volley of shots shattered the windowpanes of the new box office! The theater was leveled in the late 1950s during East Liberty's urban renewal phase. A memorial tablet was unveiled on the spot in 1961 due to efforts by the V.F.W.
- Enright Parklet was developed about two blocks west of the site of the Enright Theater. The site straddles the border of East Liberty and Friendship. Its small size explains its designation as a "parklet" rather than a park.
- Enright Court, a small group of modest homes built during the urban renewal phase in East Liberty, was developed off Broad Street. The site is adjacent to the now-closed Saints Peter and Paul School.
- The city of St. Louis renamed Von Versen Avenue as "Enright Avenue."<sup>54</sup> The city had decided to eliminate the public use of German names wherever possible, despite that city's large ethnic German population. Enright sounded much more American.
- One child was named for Enright and his two fallen companions – Hay Gresham Enright McGuire of Freeport (Armstrong County), who as a three-year-old was brought to view Enright's casket during the wake at the home of Enright's sister.<sup>55</sup>

Time may have dimmed the memory of Pittsburghers about Private Thomas Francis Enright's heroic sacrifice. As a career soldier, he might well observe: "Old Soldiers never die, they just fade away."<sup>56</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Si Steinhilber, "Priest Here Behind Network Prayer Drama," *The Pittsburgh Press*, February 10, 1947, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 187.

<sup>3</sup> For additional information, see Patrick Peyton, *All for Her: An Autobiography of Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C.* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), and Richard Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary: The Life of Patrick J. Peyton, CSC* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2005).

See also the websites: [www.fatherpeyton.org](http://www.fatherpeyton.org) and [www.familytheater.org](http://www.familytheater.org).

<sup>4</sup> "David E. Rosage [Obituary]," *The Spokesman-Review* [Spokane, WA], November 18, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Publishing Company of Milwaukee published both books. Rosage's books on altar boys came amidst publication of fiction books with cartoon illustrations featuring mischievous altar boy Speck as the main character. See, e.g., Wilmer Ralph Le Blanc, *An Altar Boy Named "Speck"* (Lafayette, LA: Tribune Printing Plant, 1952) and the four works by Margaret Ahern: *Speck the Altar Boy* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1958), *Presenting Speck the Altar Boy* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1960), *Speck: The Altar Boy* (New York: All Saints Press, 1963), and *A Speck of Trouble: New Escapades of the Inimitable and Irresistible Speck, the Altar Boy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964). Some of Ahern's works were republished in anthologies by the Catholic Family Book Club 1959-1961.

<sup>6</sup> Advertisement accompanying the Rosage books, 1950s. The name Knights of the Altar is attributed to St. John Bosco. Formal organization of a society for American altar boys took place in 1938 in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul. Publication of the *Catholic Boy* magazine followed. The magazine ceased publication and the Knights virtually disappeared as use of the Latin Mass declined in the post-Vatican II period. Return of the Tridentine Mass led to formation of The Knights of the Altar – North American Society in 2008, which maintains a website at [www.knightsofthealtarsociety.com](http://www.knightsofthealtarsociety.com).

<sup>7</sup> R. W. Vincent, "Twenty-Five Years in Belmont Abbey," in *A Short Sketch of Belmont Abbey, the Canonical Erection of the Abbacia Nullius, and the Silver Abbatial Jubilee of Rt. Rev. Leo Haid, D.D., O.S.B.* (Belmont, NC: Belmont Abbey Press, 1910), 4.

<sup>8</sup> The history of the Mercy archival consolidation is presented in Grant Gerlach, "Out of Sight But Not Out of Mind," *Gathered Fragments*, Vol. XXV (Fall 2015), 32-34.

<sup>9</sup> Paschal Baumstein, O.S.B., *My Lord of Belmont: A Biography of Leo Haid* (Belmont, NC: Archives of Belmont Abbey, 1985), 191.

<sup>10</sup> Drexel's contribution came with one stipulation: the abbey church had to have a number of pews for the exclusive use of African Americans. The abbot readily agreed. *Ibid.*, 119-121.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>12</sup> McNerney's work is discussed in two books: Miriam Miller, *A History of the Early Years of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte* (1984), and Paschal Baumstein, O.S.B., *The Art of Michael McNerney* (1992). The dramatic growth of the Catholic population in the South due to immigration from the North and from Latin America has led many parishes to raze the churches and other buildings designed by Father McNerney and replace those with new larger structures.

<sup>13</sup> "Altoona," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 9, 1897, 13.

<sup>14</sup> "Non-Catholic Mission at Johnstown a Success," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 10, 1903, 4. The church became a co-cathedral when the Diocese of Altoona was renamed the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in 1957.

<sup>15</sup> The history of the 20-room mansion is presented in Gretchen McKay, "Stately Haunt," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 27, 2001, J-1.

<sup>16</sup> See John C. Bates, "John T. Comès, Catholic Architect (1873-1922)," *Gathered Fragments*, Vol. XXIII (Fall 2013), 23-50.

<sup>17</sup> "Bellefonte," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, June 11, 1902, 13.

<sup>18</sup> The Diocese of Nesqually, established in Vancouver, Washington in 1850, moved its headquarters to Seattle in 1903, and the name was changed to Diocese of Seattle in 1907.

<sup>19</sup> *The Architect and Engineer* (May 1924), as quoted in David A. Rash, "The Beezer Brothers," in Jeffrey Karl Ochsner (ed.), *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 179.

<sup>20</sup> Blessed Sacrament was the first Catholic church built in the Hollywood area. The interior of the Italian Renaissance basilica-style church takes its inspiration from the Roman basilicas of St. Clement and St. Paul



Outside the Walls. A 223-foot campanile dominates the exterior. The church speaks of Hollywood's Golden Age. The subsequent construction of additional Catholic churches in the area has provided some competition for the moniker "Church of the Stars."

- <sup>21</sup> A list of the Beezer brothers' projects appears in "Beezer Brothers, Architects (Partnership)" at the Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD), accessed January 3, 2018, <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/firm/1641/>. An overview of the Beezer brothers' work on the West Coast is given in Heather M. MacIntosh, "Beezer Brothers Architecture Firm (1907-1923)" at the website <http://www.historylink.org/File/122> (accessed January 3, 2018).
- <sup>22</sup> Of the West Point class of 1843, 16 of the 39 became generals in the Union and Confederate Armies during the American Civil War.
- <sup>23</sup> Incorporated as a borough in 1834, Lawrenceville would be annexed to the city of Pittsburgh in 1868.
- <sup>24</sup> Neumann was canonized a saint in 1977. Seelos was beatified in 2000.
- <sup>25</sup> George Deshon, *Sermons for All the Sundays of the Ecclesiastical Year and the Principal Festivals* (New York: Catholic Book Exchange, 1902).
- <sup>26</sup> While some critics dubbed the church "Fortress Deshon," it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991 and designated a New York City Landmark in 2013. The "Hell's Kitchen" area has undergone a dramatic transformation. Lincoln Center is just two blocks north of the church, which serves Catholic students at nearby Fordham University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the Juilliard School.
- <sup>27</sup> "Father Deshon at Rest," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1904, 7. The eulogist at Deshon's funeral, Father Michael Lavelle of St. Patrick's Cathedral, described the five Paulist founders thusly: "Hecker as the idealist of the company, Walworth the orator, Hewitt the scholar, Baker the essence, and Deshon the practical man. He was the compass that directed the vessel to a safe and suitable anchorage, and to him must be credited the building of this grand church and the spread of the order." Ibid. Edward Cardinal Egan of New York opened the cause for sainthood of Father Isaac Hecker on January 25, 2008, at the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle in Manhattan. Father Hecker is now known as a "Servant of God."
- <sup>28</sup> Bernard J. Reid's early life is described in James D. Van Trump and Alfred D. Reid, Jr., "A California Gold Rush Letter from Bernard J. Reid," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (September 1961), 217-235.
- <sup>29</sup> The family name has been rendered as both "Farran" and "Farren," and at times interchangeably for the same person.
- <sup>30</sup> Additional details of the life of Judge Ambrose B. Reid appear in the work by James H. Gray, "Ambrose B. Reid — A Memorial," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 25, Nos. 1 and 2 (March-June 1942), 1-5.
- <sup>31</sup> "Rev. George J. Reid," *The Pittsburgh Press*, December 6, 1937, 33; "Father Reid Dies in Texas Hospital," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 9, 1937, 13.
- <sup>32</sup> As to the two Reid sons, see "Alfred Damian Reid" and "B. Meredith Reid" in *The American Catholic Who's Who, 1946 and 1947 (Two Years)*, Vol. 7 (Grosse Pointe, MI: Walter Romig, 1947), 373.
- <sup>33</sup> Carlton Strong was joined by B. J. Kaiser and Allan H. Neal, and at times by E. W. "Arch" Boyer. Successor firms included Kaiser, Neal & Reid; Alfred D. Reid Associates; and Reid & Stuhldreher, which was later acquired by Astorino. In 2014, CannonDesign acquired Astorino. As to the history of these architects and architectural firms, see: (1) Francis W. Kervick, *Architects in America of Catholic Tradition* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1962) and (2) Reid & Stuhldreher, PC, *A Hundred Year Retrospective: The Architect's Drawing as a Communicating Medium* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1988).
- <sup>34</sup> See Kathleen M. Washy, "Designing in God's Name: Architect Carlton Strong," *Gathered Fragments*, Vol. XXVI (Fall 2016), 2-26.
- <sup>35</sup> An exhaustive list is provided by Leo A. McMullen in "Architecture in the Diocese" in William J. Purcell (ed.), *Catholic Pittsburgh's One Hundred Years 1843-1943* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1943), 186-200.
- <sup>36</sup> "Alfred D. Reid," *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 29, 1989, B4.
- <sup>37</sup> DeLowery's life is chronicled in "A St. Mary's Boy Becomes A Hero" in Raymond Conway, *Saint Mary's Church, Forth-Sixth Street, Pittsburgh, Pa.: Something of Its History, The First 100 Years 1853-1953* (Baltimore: Universal Lithographers, 1950), 175-183. DeLowery was buried from St. Paul Cathedral in 1914, with U.S. Vice President Thomas R. Marshall in attendance. DeLowery's funeral arrangements served as a template for Enright's funeral seven years later.
- <sup>38</sup> "Thomas Enright," Wikipedia, June 28, 2018, accessed September 21, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Enright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Enright).
- <sup>39</sup> J. W. Pegler, "Salute for Dead Americans Fired at Enemy Trench" *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 8, 1917, 1. See also Michael Connors, "Finding Private Enright," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 11, 2007, H-6.
- <sup>40</sup> "France Pays Homage to Enright's Memory: French War Cross Conferred," *The Pittsburgh Post*, November 27, 1917, 3. The French military decoration had been created in 1915.
- <sup>41</sup> The monument's history is told in Chris Dickon, *The Foreign Burial of American War Dead: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), 44-45. The monument, funded by the French, was destroyed by the Germans in World War II but rebuilt after the Second World War. A picture of the present monument appears at the following webpages, accessed January 6, 2017: (1) <http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/bathlemont.htm> and (2) <http://www.uswarmemorials.org/admin/images/memorials/1372328169bathelemont%20pic.jpg>.
- <sup>42</sup> Enright's sister had not seen her brother-soldier for five years and did not know he was in France until receiving the telegram from the War Department. "East End Man One of First War Victims," *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 5, 1917, 1. Enright's siblings changed locations with some regularity which may explain why Enright's sister had not seen him in five years, notwithstanding that he had been in Pittsburgh briefly in 1916, just one year before his death.
- <sup>43</sup> "Pittsburgh Soldier Killed in Action on French Front," *The Pittsburgh Post*, November 6, 1917, 2.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Pittsburgh Post*, November 5, 1917, 1.
- <sup>45</sup> *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 5, 1917, 1.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Gazette Times*, November 6, 1917, 1.
- <sup>47</sup> See Torsten Ove, "The Dying Continued into the 11th Hour of WWI," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 11, 2013, A-5.
- <sup>48</sup> "Private Thomas F. Enright One of First Three Americans to Die at Front," *The Pittsburgh Post*, November 6, 1917, 1, 3; "Pittsburgh Soldier Killed in Action on French Front," 2
- <sup>49</sup> Connors, "Finding Private Enright," H-6; "Services at Pier for Pittsburgh Soldier Killed in 1917," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, July 14, 1921, 1.
- <sup>50</sup> "Half-Holiday Urged for Tribute by City to Soldier Enright," *The Gazette Times*, July 4, 1921, 1.
- <sup>51</sup> Boyle had been installed as sixth bishop of Pittsburgh on June 29, only 17 days before Enright's funeral Mass at the cathedral.
- <sup>52</sup> "Enright, First Slain in War, Buried Here," *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, July 17, 1921, Second Section, 6; "Thousands Pay Tribute to City's First Dead of War," *The Pittsburgh Sunday Post*, July 17, 1921, 2.
- <sup>53</sup> A fairly complete list appears in Connors, "Finding Private Enright," H-6.
- <sup>54</sup> "St. Louis Honors Enright," *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 19, 1918, 1.
- <sup>55</sup> "Boy Named for Heroes Views Enright Bier in West Etna Home," *The Pittsburgh Sunday Post*, July 17, 1921, 2.
- <sup>56</sup> General Douglas A. McArthur, in his farewell address to a joint session of both houses of Congress on April 19, 1951. As McArthur noted, he did not coin the phrase; it came from a song popular among British soldiers in World War I called "Old Soldiers Never Die."